LPG connections for the quarter January-March, 1997 which is yet to be exhausted can be utilised in the calendar year 1997 as per guidelines already printed on the front of Priority Voucher Booklet and on the reverse of each Special Priority Voucher i.e. "Priority Vouchers are valid only if issued during 1997". However, the question of discontinuing issue of priority vouchers to Members of Parliament is being examined in the light of the announcement made by Hon'ble Speaker Lok Sabha on 26.2.97 to discontinue priority connections to M.Ps from 1.4.97.

Increase in quota of bitumen for Gujarat

2754. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Gujarat has been pressing to increase the quota of bitumen, in view of the constraints of supply and the delay suffered in execution of road construction works in the State; and

(b) if so, the precise demand made by the State Government and the Central Government's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) The Government of Gujarat has not requested for any increase in the allocation of bitumen. The State Government had only requested for ensuring adequate supplies against the allocation in view of certain constraints felt in the supplies in the earlier part of 1996-97.

Based on the State's requirement of bitumen as reported by the Oil Companies, the Government has allocated 284 TMT of bitumen (bulk: 271 TMT and packed: 13 TMT) during 1996-97.

Expenditure on oil imports during the Eighth Five Year Plan

2755. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have spent Rs. 93000 crores on oil imports during the Eighth Five Year Plan period; and

(b) if so, what steps Government propose to take to check this alarming increae in oil imports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) During VIII Five Year Plan, an amount of Rs. 93,492 crores approximately has been spent on oil imports.

(b) To contain oil import bill, steps are being taken to increae refinery capacity by expansion of existing refineries in public sector and setting up of refineries in the joint sector and private sector. Steps are also being taken to increase crude oil production in the country through application of improved technologies, development of new fields, additional development of existing fields and by inviting foreign and private capital in the upstream sector.

Consumption of Natural Gas

2756. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: SHRI S.M. KRISHNA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total consumption of natural gas in the country;

(b) the percentage of the natural gas used as feedstock in power sector, fertilizers and other core sectors; and

(c) the percentage of natural gas used in the non-priority sectors?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R